

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A computer-implemented method for producing a printable document in
5 platform-independent format, the method comprising:
importing form and content data comprising a document into a print generation
process;
extracting graphical layout information and content data from the document to
produce a stripped document;
10 defining metadata specifying data types and data field coordinates from the
graphical layout information and the content data;
merging the stripped document with the metadata and new content data to
produce a new document consisting of the new content data in a format consistent with
the imported document.
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2. The method of claim 1 wherein the document comprises a form consisting of pre-
defined fields, with each field of the pre-defined field containing a unique portion of
content data.
- 20 3. The method of claim 2 wherein the metadata comprises rules defining coordinate
location and appearance information for each of the pre-defined fields.

4. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of processing the content data in a script interpreter subprocess prior to merging the content data with the stripped document and metadata.

5 5. The method of claim 4 wherein the content data is stored in a memory storage coupled to a computer importing the form and content data.

6. A computer-implemented method for producing a printable document in platform-independent format, the method comprising:

10 receiving a pre-defined document consisting of graphical layout information and sample content data;

defining metadata rules from the pre-defined document that dictate data types and data field locations within the pre-defined document;

extracting the sample content data from the pre-defined document to produce a
15 stripped document containing graphical layout information; and

merging the stripped document with the metadata rules and new content data to produce a new document consisting of the new content data in a format consistent with the predefined document.

20 7. The method of claim 6 wherein the pre-defined document comprises a form consisting of pre-defined fields, with each field of the pre-defined field containing a unique portion of content data.

8. The method of claim 7 wherein the metadata comprises rules defining coordinate location and appearance information for each of the pre-defined fields.

9. The method of claim 6 further comprising the step of processing the content data
5 in a script interpreter subprocess prior to merging the content data with the stripped document and metadata rules.

10. The method of claim 9 wherein the content data is stored in a memory storage coupled to a computer importing the form and content data.

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11. The method of claim 6 further comprising the steps of:
converting the pre-defined document to a PDF document; and
defining the metadata within the converted PDF document.

15 12. A system for producing a printable document in platform-independent format, comprising:

an input process configured to receive a pre-defined document consisting of graphical layout information and sample content data;

a metadata generator configured to derive metadata rules from the pre-defined
20 document that dictate data types and data field locations within the pre-defined document;

an extraction process configured to extract the sample content data from the pre-defined document to produce a stripped document containing graphical layout information; and

a merge process configured to merge the stripped document with the metadata rules and new content data to produce a new document consisting of the new content data in a format consistent with the predefined document.

13. The system of claim 12 wherein the pre-defined document comprises a form consisting of pre-defined fields, with each field of the pre-defined field containing a unique portion of content data.

14. The system of claim 13 wherein the metadata comprises rules defining coordinate location and appearance information for each of the pre-defined fields.

15. The system of claim 15 further comprising a script interpreter subprocess configured to process the content data prior to merging the content data with the stripped document and metadata rules.

16. The system of claim 12 further comprising a memory storage storing the content data.

17. The system of claim 16 wherein the input process is executed on a server computer coupled to a client computer over a network, and wherein the memory storage is coupled to the network.
- 5 18. The system of claim 18 wherein the network comprises the World Wide Web portion of the Internet, and wherein the printable document comprises a PDF document.
19. The system of claim 16 further comprising a printing device coupled to the network and configured to print the new document.